
Dr. Aronson's Plea for Unity:

Letter to the Editor of the *New York Call*, May 12, 1919.

by M. Aronson

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Editor of *The Call*:

As an old Socialist and member of the Socialist Party in New York, I ask the indulgence of the readers of *The Call* for laying before them the following comments on the present situation in the party. My letter far exceeds the stipulated length, but so many memories crowd upon me as I write and my concern for the welfare of the socialist movement is so great that I have found it impossible to write within a narrow compass.

The condition of affairs in Socialist ranks in New York City requires adjustment. My reasoning is based on what I myself witnessed and what I heard from others. I may have been mistaken or misinformed, but what I intend to say is according to my best knowledge and belief. The administration of Local New York, Socialist Party, achieved the following in the last few weeks:

1. It resolved that no paid advertisement from the Left Wing, Socialist Party, be printed in *The Call*. If any meeting of a branch is supposed to be of the "Left" character, the advertisement has to be signed by the member or members endorsing that meeting.

A perfectly arbitrary decision, in my opinion. These many years *The Call* has been sustained by all comrades, of varying opinions; now, when *The Call* has gained some strength, when, as I hope, it is going to be a real power for good, the decision is made to close its doors to known and unknown comrades, who have given their support to *The Call* in the times of its distress, who are still reading and supporting the paper, in spite of its many shortcomings, as the main party paper of New York — these comrades are not to have the benefits of using our press because of their supposedly heretical opinions. Advertisements were printed in *The Call* of dubious character, unworthy of

being printed in a daily of international socialism, and no such resolution was passed. In the most flagrant cases, the specific advertisement was stopped. Now, it is generalized against members of the party, against our own flesh and blood!

2. Not satisfied with that, "representatives" of the administration proclaimed and reiterated in *The Call*, in the Central Committee, etc., that the Left Wing formed an organization just as the Socialist Party, with Central and City Committees, State Committees, National Executive Committees, etc., etc.

3. The Waldman resolution, proclaiming the above and declaring the Left Wing a menace, was sent to all the branches for discussion and deliberation. Waldman was only the introducer of the resolution; it was worked out not by him alone, but at the initiative and with the help of others of the local administration. So I understand to have been the case.

4. Having found that the Waldman resolution may be defeated by the rank and file, and that it may take too long to wait, the administration seems to have been anxious to hasten matters. One of the most clever and honest of its members, Comrade S. John Block, tried to propose a city convention. His proposal was defeated in the Central Committee by the ruling majority and superseded by the motion of Comrade Dr. Berlin, namely, to select a committee of 7 members of Local New York, in order to prepare a platform, resolutions, etc., for the decision of the Central Committee (I am sorry Comrade Block was not present to defend the object of his motion). In his great liberality and love of fair play, Dr. Berlin would not object; in fact, he would even agree to have both factions represented in that committee. This point was, naturally, emphasized by other delegates; half and half of each faction and an impartial seventh one, was suggested.

At the nomination this last point was declared void. The result of the election, however, was the following: Three of the standpatters, two of the so-called Left Wing, and two others received equal votes, one a pronounced Left Winger and one not a Left Winger <illeg.> and as a result the Right Wing won by a majority of one vote. The two Left Wingers elected immediately resigned, “not being properly represented.” (It was a mistake, I believe, as a minority report could be submitted by them, and that would do good).

5. The administration apparently decided that all this is not sufficient to combat the “hydra” of the Left Wing and put up “machine guns” at the recent meeting of the State Committee at Albany. There it had an easy away. Being “entre-nous,” and after a pre-arranged caucus, the majority in power — almost all the same comrades, the same officials figuring at the head of the Central and Executive Committee of Local New York, at the head of the City Committee, State Committee, State Executive Committee, etc. — adopted the most monstrous proposition of excluding from the party whole locals, branches, and groups containing any member or members having views not in accordance with the fanatical pharisees of the Right Wingers. This is, at least, the sense of the wording “similar” in that resolution. The proposition is a real Bolshevick measure, but inaugurated, not in the time after the revolution against the contra-revolutionaries, against Tsarist and plutocratic plotters, but in times far, far away from a social revolution in America, and just directed against theoretical revolutionary socialists! This resolution to be sent for a referendum of the comrades. Even such members of the State Committee who declared themselves, before they left Albany, more or less tolerant — even half or three-quarters Left Wingly-inclined — were induced by the *esprit de corps* to vote in Albany for the resolution or to participate in its participation, and then to declare: “I do not vote” — sitting between two chairs. How any intellectual Socialist (and intellectuals they are, all of them), not blinded by hatred and fanaticism, could give his consent to such a monstrous resolution is a psychological and psychiatric problem, worthy of the diagnosis of expert alienists.

6. Having returned from Albany in high colors, with the guillotine for all dissenters constructed, the administration was faced with the recall of 10 or 13

delegates of one branch [17th AD Branch] and the election of other delegates, apparently more “revolutionary.” That shall not be. The headquarters of that branch were opened; all the books, membership lists, and other documents removed; the headquarters closed up and a new reorganization of the branch ordered. By what right? By what authority? By what bylaw? There is nothing even in the present bylaws, the most centralistic we ever had, to justify such a procedure.

The only points of the bylaws that could be applied to such a case are: Sub Executive Committee, Section 4(e) “to investigate disputes between the branches of the local; (f) pass upon the formation of new branches or changes in the present divisions of the local,” but not to remove the property of the branch, not to close the headquarters, and to start reorganization before proper investigation by the Grievance Committee and consent of the central body. The Executive Committee is a committee only of the Central Committee, not a plenipotentiary institution in such a grave question.

7. Still not satisfied, the administration announced from the headquarters that it is going to apply the same measures to all the branches not liked at. No more waiting for the report of the elected committee of seven, no more waiting for the results of the referendum concerning the Albany State Committee resolution, no more discussion. The iron is hot; we are in power; might is right; arbitrary rule is our life! Justice, solidarity, brotherly comradeship to the wind — imagination, idealistic phrases!

To strengthen the position a very peculiar form of reorganization was put up, I am told. The Socialist Party of the United States has an application blank which every applicant for membership has to sign. The most important, salient points are printed on each application blank, namely, the recognition of the class antagonism and of the class struggle and the nonadherence to any other bourgeois political party. That is not enough. Just as the military conscription law for war, an extra questionnaire is ordered. Are you against the Left Wing? Suppose one does not know anything about the Left Wing. Suppose one is a good Socialist and wishes to remain a member of the party, but finds fault with many of the present tactics of the majority rulers and agrees with some of the postulates of the radical members — no place for you any more in the

Socialist Party: you are excluded.

How many times did I not hear from one and the other among the shining lights of the party that he is opposed to this and that of the platform; that he is not going to stand by all of it!

Suppose one does not agree with every opinion of many comrades who made great sums of money from the war, who got rich quick by the adverse circumstances of the last World War situation, and who, having filled their coffers, indirectly, with bloody war money, are donating \$500 or even \$5,000 to party purposes and continue playing the role of managers and owners of party property, while others, the rank and file, who can give only a small mite of their earnings by hard manual or brain work, while such comrades have almost nothing to say? Suppose one is of the sincere opinion that bureaucracy is growing rampant in our New York party and many of the stand-patters in the Central Committee, many of the opponents of more revolutionary tactics are salaried or semi-salaried officials. Suppose one believes that old brothers, more experienced ones, that “leaders” of proletarian socialism, should teach, discuss, enlighten, and forgive mistakes, even grave mistakes of younger, honest attempts at socialism, and not to assault them, not to call them jackasses, not to call them a mob, not to come to blows!

8. In order to kill the opposition, in order to incite it to the extreme, in order to compel it and to be aggressive and boisterous and — to withdraw from the party, in order to deprive it of its rights at the national convention, more stringent measures have been practiced. Letters have been sent to all “loyal” comrades (to how many, officialdom only knows) to come to a conference and to decide what is to be done with those black sheep, who dared to bring some life in the New York Socialist Party.

9. A roll call, which is obligatory at every meeting of the Central Committee according to the bylaws of the party, is neglected, and when it is called for, obstructions and protests arise from the majority rulers and — if nothing helps, it is declared that it requires a majority vote. How well versed they are in bringing up technicalities.

10. The culmination of the tactics at the last meeting of the Central Committee was the trick of putting out the lights, in the hope that the “Left Wing-

ers” will leave and then the Right Wingers will remain alone and adopt their motion. Having failed in that, a new measure was practiced. The police were called in to drive out the assembly. In my long life I have witnessed meetings of comrades all over Europe and here. Even at the times (in the '70s of the last century) of the hottest fights in Germany between the followers of Lassalle and the adepts of the Eisenach program, I never saw socialists calling the police to disperse their own meetings. International socialists called the police to help them in their quarrels. The present administration of Local New York covered itself with eternal glory.

Why all this terrific prosecution in the midst of our ranks? The so-called Left Wing printed a leaflet, a manifesto. It is not a crime against the party, I think. Many leaflets have been written, printed, and distributed by Local New York that were in no way of higher merit, aye some were worthy to be thrown in the wastebasket. I would not identify myself with the so-called manifesto. Some parts of it are superfluous, other parts are not correct, I believe, but this is important. There are many good statements in it; the most salient points are such. Why was not the manifesto sent to the branches for discussion, together with its antipode, the so-called Waldman resolution? In fact the manifesto is for the dictatorship of the proletariat after a revolution. Are the majority rulers of New York against it? Why? They endorsed the Russian Soviet Republic and the Hungarian Republic, both instituted by the dictatorship of the proletariat. The manifesto is for industrial unionism. Are the majority rulers of New York for Gompers? And so with other points of the manifesto. Let us discuss it all freely, scientifically, and in a brotherly spirit; let us accept what is good and deny all that which is not good in it; let us come to an agreement or even to a disagreement concerning the merits or demerits of that leaflet, but no enmities, no hatred, no expulsion, no disruption and disenfranchisement of comrades.

The Left Wing collects “dues.” They deny it. But suppose it to be true, then let them. All the roads lead to Rome. Many of the party members donate to different socialist activities, and there was and there is no harm in that.

The Left Wing issued special membership cards — foolishly, in my opinion; but even this does not

constitute a crime against socialism; even this could be ignored. The moment the radical wing is convinced that the fight has ceased and free discussion is permitted, they may drop this ornament and combine their efforts to work in unison with all the others, as before.

The world is aflame, capitalism is working with great intensity to create the real iron heel, the hopes of world peace and abolition of war are getting more and more illusory, the “holy alliance,” triple or quadruple alliance, is to be established; militarism to be adopted by the most civilized nations. Hunger and death, epidemic and desolation, prevail in most of the European countries, and in the United States the profiteers only are prosperous. Germany is to be dismembered and enslaved by a treaty equal to, or much worse than, the Brest-Litovsk treaty of infamous Kaiserism. The Soviet Republics of Russia, of Hungary, of Austria, are in danger. The German Republic, the parody of a socialist republic, is murdering workingmen and the best representatives of the workingmen in the desire to establish order, order of a dubious capitalistic nature. Thousands and tens of thousands of socialists and revolutionists are prisoners all over the world. Our E.V. Debs, the ardent champion of socialism and of the brotherhood of man, the most intense lover of the working class and of socialism, is in prison, a prisoner for his life, and many more good and true comrades, good and true and honest men and women, are behind iron doors for their convictions. And we, the socialists, who live in the hope and expectation of the approaching death of the capitalist system; we who live in the hope and expectation of the triumph of the proletariat, of the establishment of the brotherhood of man based upon abolition of exploitation of men by man; we, who hope that, “instead of the government over persons will come the management of things,” “and supervision of the processes of production” (Engels) — we are fighting over trifles, we squabble and quarrel over words and phrases, cards and wings!

Turn to your quarters, all of you, comrades! Remember your high mission! You of the Left Wing, present your case, define your principles among the rank and file, in the branches, in the Central and other

committees; use the press to the utmost, prove by your activities that you are worthy of the leadership, but do not lose your equilibrium, do not be boisterous, and drop everything which may harm your cause. The salient points of your demands will be adopted by the party. And to you, comrades of the Right and other wings, comrades of the Socialist administration and of the political machine of Local and State of New York — I dare say this: Not the Left Wing is disrupting the party, but you are doing it by your recent anti-socialistic measures and crusade against comrades. Do not abuse your power, do not get swellheaded, do not expel your more radical brothers from the party, do not act like the bureaucrats and politicians of the capitalist class! If you continue your tactics of expulsion and reorganization (with the iron fist) of whole branches, you may succeed temporarily; you may drive out those not agreeable to you, and with them many of your oldest comrades — you may gain the victory to the gaudium of our common enemies; you may gain it by might and tricks, but not by right, and the time will come when you will regret it.

“*Discite, Moniti!*” Learn, you are warned! said the old Wilhelm Liebknecht to Bismarck and his promoters of the shameful Anti-Socialist Law in Germany. You are not Bismarcks, I am not a Liebknecht, but I think it is quite in order for you to *Discite, Moniti!*

Comrades, it is not too late yet. Drop this rubbish; let us be all united. We are so few and the enemies are so many. Amicable discussions and decisions. No disruptions, no closing up of branches, no State Resolutions! Forget and forgive. Let us combine our efforts to have the political prison doors opened, to gain the recognition by the United States of the proletarian Soviet government of Russia; let us correct our mistakes; let us continue to be useful to humanity and to realize our aim: the greatest good for the greatest number, for the workingmen — and the abolition of the capitalist system with its exploitation, imperialism, war, militarism, and other excesses. In unity there is strength.

Dr. M. Aronson.

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